# Chapter 13
# "What Kinds of People are We?" Values Education After Apartheid

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South Africa's formal transition to democracy in 1994 was an inspiring moment. However, it would be naive to assume that the task of transforming so evil a social order as apartheid can be accomplished in a moment. Many practices of the apartheid era persist, as do age-old vices such as murder and incest. Add to these, widespread corruption at all levels of the public service and apparently new vices such as a shocking spate of baby-rapes, and there may be good reason for moral outrage if not despair. Values education would seem to be an obvious place to begin to overcome these ills. A central aim of this chapter is to describe and evaluate South Africa's approach to values education for an emergent democracy built on the foundations of a corrupt and divided society.

South Africa is a society which chose to come to terms with its violent and divided past with the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Stories that emerged in the TRC hearings may help us see more clearly some of what is required for the moral reconstruction of the society and what role values education might play in it. Take, for example, the story of Captain Jeffrey Benzien, notorious for his expertise in the torture of suspected political activists. He suffocated his victims by placing a wet bag over their heads. During a hearing of the TRC, Benzien demonstrated his method. Tony Yengeni, one of his victims and an activist who became a member of parliament, asked at the hearing:

> What kind of a man uses a method like this – one of the wet bag, to people, to other human beings repeatedly and listening to those moans and cries and groans and taking each of those people very near to their deaths – what kind of man are you? What kind of man is it that, that can do that kind of. … What kind of human being is that, Mr Benzien?… I am talking about the man behind the wet bag. When you do those things, what goes through your head, your mind? What effect does that torture activity done to you as a human being?

Benzien replied:

> I, Jeff Benzien, have asked myself that question to such an extent, and it is not easy for me to say this in a full court with a lot of people who do not know me … approached psychiatrists to have myself evaluated to find out what sort of person am I. (Quoted in Beresford 1998, p. 22)

Benzien's story and his interchange with Yengeni reveal what must surely be a primary concern for values education. "What kind of man are you?" Yengeni



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repeatedly asks. This is a question about character and imagination. Where a man can take pride in his skills of torture, his moral imagination has failed; he has not seen what it would be like to be someone else.

Given the social context which could produce a Benzien, how is South Africa undertaking the moral reconstruction of society and, more particularly, what kind of values education policy guides the formation of young people's values? Does it take up the fundamental question of character and, if so, how? What do we want from a policy for values education? More broadly, how and how far, if at all, should values education aim to make moral citizens for a particular society?

This chapter describes and evaluates developments in values education in South Africa since the transition to democracy in 1994. The first section deals with conceptual matters. Here we sketch the relationship between values education and character education; outline a distinction between non-expansive and expansive conceptions; indicate some pitfalls of values education; and propose some criteria for evaluating values education policy. The second section examines two key documents in conceptualizing values education for a post-apartheid South Africa – the Report of the Working Group on Values in Education (Department of Education 2000) and the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (Department of Education 2001). While both documents feature values associated with civic virtue, these are much more prominent in the Manifesto, which is also more expansive in its account of the proposed values and relationships among them, and in justifying values education within the context of a diverse, constitutional democracy. The third section analyses one value, *ubuntu*, which the Manifesto presents as a necessary complement to those democratic civic virtues whose lineage may be traced through western political theory. One dominant interpretation of *ubuntu* is linked to calls for a return to the principles of indigenous African education and to a floundering Moral Regeneration Campaign. Interpreted thus, we argue, *ubuntu* undermines democratic education. We make a case for a more expansive, democratically defensible interpretation, kindled in part by Martha Nussbaum's (2001; see also Nussbaum 1990) defence of compassion. We find the warrant for this more commodious conception in the national curriculum (Department of Education 2003, 2004) and in a recently issued guide to *Values and Human Rights in the Curriculum* (Department of Education 2005) (see also Zagzebski 1996).

## 1 Conceptions and Criteria

Our question "What do we want from a policy for values education?" deliberately parallels Amelie Rorty's (1988) "What do we want from a moral theory?" Her response offers an illuminating perspective from which to consider approaches to values education. For Rorty, at least in this 1988 publication, a moral theory should provide a rich picture of well-lived lives and offer general principles for regulating conduct. A robust theory should be action-guiding in a general way, helping to get

us from where we are to "where we might better be". For this it requires an astute contextual understanding of psychology, history and politics:

> Because moral theories combine practical concerns with idealised evaluations, they must be sensitive to the particular political and socio-psychological conditions in which they are to be applied. A moral theory that recommends political and psychological reforms must also pay attention to the ways in which its proposed re-directions can effectively and successfully be brought about, given actual conditions. (Rorty 1988, p. 15)

Stories from the Truth and Reconciliation hearings encapsulate several of the central political and socio-psychological motifs that haunt public discourse and shape the possibilities for a democratic culture. Benzien's story is one of many publicly recounted *petits recits* which raise the question of whether a sustained democratic culture is possible without particular kinds of people – not people who merely proclaim their commitment to democracy and its supposed values, but who have the discernment and abiding dispositions to act in some ways rather than others.

Character education is the broad term for any systematic attempt to shape particular *kinds of people* through education and it involves, inescapably, the development of values. But the reverse is not the case: values education need not involve character education. Some approaches to values education attempt to avoid any particular shaping of values or moral outlook. They do so, for example, through values clarification, teaching people about different values, helping them to articulate their own values and to understand those of others. Values clarification and its close cousins are vulnerable to charges of relativism and, in some versions, of trivialising moral reasoning.

Although there are traces of values clarification in some of the Learning Area statements and accompanying teachers' guides for the national curriculum, South Africa's education policy documents are shot through with references to *the kind of person or learner* the curriculum aims to produce. As a whole, the policy bears upon the formation of persons in a wide-ranging way and those parts of it that relate to values education aim to develop learners who embody and live by particular values, as we will show at various points throughout the chapter. Here is one of many examples: "[The curriculum] *seeks to create* a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate and multiskilled, compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen" (Department of Education 2003, p. 8) (our emphasis). On the defensible assumption, then, that South African policy for values education is character-focussed, it is appropriate to ask "What kind of character education?" and to ask whether and how the policy deals with common objections to character education. Perhaps the strongest objections to character education are that it entails an inappropriate imposition of values and assumes a single and unitary conception of successful moral personhood. In any diverse and divided society these would be compelling objections.

Whether character-focussed values education can, or should try to, avoid inappropriate value imposition and the assumption of a unitary conception of moral personhood depends on how it is conceived. Different conceptions of character education can be placed on a continuum from *non-expansive* to *expansive*. Halstead and McLaughlin (1999) define the expansiveness of an approach in terms of the

nature and extent of (i) its rationale; (ii) the qualities it proposes for development through education and (iii) the role it gives to moral and other forms of reasoning on the part of the student.

At one end of the continuum, *non-expansive approaches* offer limited justifications, commonly comprising a diagnosis of individual and social ills for which character education is supposed to be the remedy; they identify core values as fundamental to character development; and emphasise systematic direct instruction and habituation (as opposed to the development of reasoning), postponing discussion of controversial moral issues until the main work of character formation has been completed. Teachers and schools that exemplify the core values are thought to play an integral part in the development of the desired qualities by modelling them in the tenor of their actions and ethos. Non-expansive approaches have been subject to wide-ranging criticism whose main points may be summarised as follows (see Halstead & McLaughlin 1999, pp. 142–146 for a more detailed account):

- Justifications that rest on a diagnosis of social ills often assume, falsely, that the values-based behaviour of individuals is the prime cause of social or moral decay. This assumption neglects social context as a contributory (possibly constitutive) factor.
- Without a comprehensive framework of values, non-expansive approaches cannot be assessed or even properly understood.
- Under the guise of core values, non-expansive approaches advance a particular (typically conservative) moral point of view, which neglects competing conceptions of the good and downplays the need for open-minded, respectful discussion of different views.
- Core values are often under-defined, a weakness that is magnified in cases where there is no comprehensive framework to enable coherent interpretation of the claimed core values. As a result, apparent consensus among stakeholders about core vales may be no more than a salute to value labels.
- Moral compliance typically trumps rich forms of practical judgement, reasoning and critical independence as an "educational" goal.
- Many non-expansive approaches fail to work out a well-grounded or systematic pedagogy. Exhortation and presumption mask inadequate praxis.

At the other end of the continuum, *expansive approaches* involve a more elaborate justification; a broader, more complex conception of qualities for development; and greater stress on the role of reasoning in the development of character and its typical virtues and values. The challenge for expansive conceptions is to propose "commonly acceptable" and appropriately elaborated "forms of value influence" which avoid accusations of "illicit value imposition" (Halstead & McLaughlin 1999, p. 148). One way of meeting the challenge is to focus only or primarily on values and qualities associated with the requirements for systematic learning (e.g., Sockett 1997). Another is to focus on developing civic virtues, attempting to link substantive qualities of character with the general requirements of democratic citizenship rather than directly with moral life as a whole (see, e.g., Gutmann 1987; Gould 1988; White 1996; Callan 1997; Enslin et al. 2001). In a democratic context, the idea that equal citizenship depends on civic virtue commonly serves as part of

the justification for character-focused values education – as Callan (1997) puts it, "free and equal citizenship is ... about the kind of people we become, and the kind of people we encourage or allow our children to become" (p. 2). Apart from the risk of illicit value imposition, expansive approaches concerned with civic virtues must overcome such additional difficulties as achieving consensus on the conception of civic virtue to be adopted for educational purposes; maintaining the delicate balance between fostering affiliation on the one hand and encouraging criticism on the other; and acknowledging the importance of habitation and institutional conditions in character formation without forfeiting the central role of reasoning and the burdens of judgement.

And so we come to judgement of a different kind. When we want to evaluate a policy for values education, by what criteria should we judge it? Rorty's reflections on what we want from a moral theory suggest some possibilities. So, too, does the distinction between non-expansive and expansive approaches. Following these pointers, we propose some fairly loose, overlapping criteria for evaluating policy for character-focussed values education (with the caveat that, given the pragmatic nature of policy formation, we are not requiring policies to be philosophically sophisticated):

1. Is the policy conceptually coherent?
2. Does it express theoretical assumptions as practical principles in terms which are accessible to teachers, principals and other stakeholders in education? In other words, is it appropriate to its intended audience?
3. Is it appropriate to context? (For example, does it reflect the prevalent vices and desired virtues of a society, and avoid harbouring potential vices?)
4. How does it justify the need for values education (expansively or non-expansively)?
5. How, if at all, does it justify its selection of values (expansively or non-expansively)?
6. Does it espouse values likely to be shared by a significant proportion of the population?
7. Does it offer possible strategies for how to get from where we are to where we might better be?

Stipulating criteria is a risky business, for the stipulated list may be taken to be exhaustive or mutually exclusive when it is neither. On this cautionary note, we proceed in the next section to put the criteria to work on two key documents in the development of values education policy for South Africa.

## 2 Values, Education, and Democracy

Taking the new Constitution as its starting point (RSA 1996), South Africa's White Paper on Education and Training (1995) presents a vision of education for democracy and emphasises the need for a new moral order that "embodies the collective moral perspective of its citizens" (p. 17). It acknowledges that our history has been one of contending moralities, misrecognition of the inalienable worth and dignity

of each individual, and mutual intolerance. The vision clearly requires psychological as well as political reform. In 1997 a new national curriculum, Curriculum 2005, was developed to translate the vision into practice through the establishment of a single curriculum for all schools (Department of Education 1997). In principle at least, all young citizens receive the same education in values, intended to break with the deeply entrenched traditions of apartheid. Subsequent revisions to the national curriculum sustain commitment to a common education in values for all.

By 2000 the optimism of the early years of democracy had given way to deep pessimism about continuing violence and corruption, and a new sense of social disintegration. One highly profiled educational strategy for addressing this problem came from the working group on Values in Education, established in February 2000 by Kader Asmal, the Minister of Education at the time. Much lively public debate followed the release of its Report on Values in Education. Fifteen months later, in August 2001, the Ministry issued its Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy.

## *2.1 Six Core Values for Education?*

The working group presented its Report of the Working Group on Values in Education (Department of Education 2000) to the Minister of Education in May 2000 as starting point for a national debate on "the appropriate values South Africa ought to embrace in its primary and secondary educational institutions" (Department of Education 2000, p. 1). More ambitiously, it aimed to influence the shaping of a democratic national character, as reflected in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. It recommended six core values for education: equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and honour; and made nine recommendations about steps to be taken in fostering them, including the promotion of African languages; performing arts programmes in schools; and displaying national symbols in schools.

Despite some promising moves, the Report is a disappointing document. Perhaps its flaws were inevitable, given the Report's status as a starting point for national debate rather than as a definitive policy statement. Still, the eccentricity of its list of values is striking, as are its omissions and occlusions. Why these values? Why not decency, fairness, trust, civility, peace and hope? How, if at all, are the listed values supposed to hang together and what vices and common practices are they supposed to stand up against? These are precisely the kinds of questions that a non-expansive account prompts. In the absence of a comprehensive framework of values, the question "Why *these* values rather than others?" must remain unanswered. The conceptual framework, such as it is, consists largely of gestural definitions and quick appeals to "commonsense" about the dual personal and social roles of education, as this example illustrates:

> By values we mean desirable qualities of character such as honesty, integrity, tolerance, diligence, responsibility, compassion, altruism, justice, respect, and so on. … The promotion of values is important not only for the sake of personal development but also for the evolution of a South African national character. (Department of Education 2000, p. 6)

Equity, tolerance and openness are values which are clearly appropriate to the context of post-apartheid South Africa and are likely to be endorsed by a significant proportion of citizens keen to foster democracy. However, the Report interprets equity only in relation to an unequal system but says very little about why it takes equity to be a *value* and how it might be taught or otherwise nurtured. Tolerance is construed as a deep and meaningful concept "of mutual understanding, reciprocal altruism and the active appreciation of the value of human difference" (Department of Education 2000, p. 13). History, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, extra-mural activities such as sport and performing arts are recommended for their role in promoting "tolerance through diversity" (Department of Education 2000, p. 17). These are laudable gestures, but the Report says very little about the nature of tolerance and its complexities. Like the other recommended core values, tolerance is under-defined and so becomes a label that can be used to license sloganised thinking, as is evident when the authors venture into the domain of pedagogy. They seem to want to teach tolerance by getting people to be enthusiastic about difference. Insisting that diversity should be celebrated runs the risk of trivialising a gravely important moral issue, of brushing aside serious consideration of why tolerance is important and how to develop it.

The inclusion of accountability in the absence of such essential everyday virtues as honesty and integrity is bizarre. What is more, in its treatment of accountability, the Report blurs the distinction between the qualities to be developed in learners and the qualities required in teachers. No doubt there is a need for teachers to be held to account, especially in South Africa where there is a high rate of teacher absenteeism and other forms of irresponsible behaviour. But we worry about a sense of accountability that casts it as toeing the party line. Compliance and what Gutmann (1987) calls a morality of authority appear to trump a morality of principle here – yet another mark of a non-expansive approach.

Social honour, the value that most explicitly sets out to develop national character, is the most problematic. In our context, social honour is a quaint notion not prominent in public discourse. While it has some desirable connotations, suggesting that an honourable person would be principled and consistent, it also has, historically, a meaning in tension with some of the other values endorsed in the Report and thus fails to meet the criterion of coherence. A number of imperatives are given for teaching honour at schools; some trivial and uncontroversial, others too close to blind patriotism for comfort. For instance: "Learners must be proud of the national sports team"; "Learners must be taught to see the flag and coat of arms as their own" and "Learners must say the … vow of allegiance to the country at every weekly assembly" (p. 8). The proposed vow of allegiance calls on citizens to work, among other things, for "peace, friendship and reconciliation". While the call rings true, it points to a series of category mistakes in the set of proposed values. Peace, friendship and reconciliation are all values in their own right and some if not all may be more important than honour as conceived here.

As Charles Taylor recounts (1992, 44ff.), the pre-modern conception of honour preceded the politics of equal dignity. In a system of hierarchical honour, "we are in competition; one person's glory must be another's shame, or at least obscurity"

(p. 48). Where a concern with honour remains in the postmodern world, it resides in traditional communities and in military codes. Michael Ignatieff (1998) writes of honour in the context of ethnic war and contemporary conscience, noting the earlier warrior codes of Christian soldiers and the samurai of feudal Japan. The warrior's honour, largely absent in late 20th-century conflicts, was an ethical system that established strict rules of combat. While it had the virtue of usually distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants, it was a warrior's code that applied to men only. It was not a code for women and its exercise was irrelevant to the treatment of infidels. So highly particular and explicitly non-universalist a concept is not compatible, historically, with equality and hence with the democratic values of our new order.

To conclude, how far does the Report meet the adequacy criteria we listed at the beginning of the chapter? Although it starts out by flagging a range of desirable qualities of character, most of these disappear from view, leaving us puzzled about why it excludes from their key values such virtues as honesty, integrity and compassion, virtues which may have been present if the authors had worked from a shared and explicit conceptual framework and justification. The Report fails in three other important related respects. First, while it is appropriate to context and reflects some prevalent vices and desired virtues, the Report lacks conceptual coherence because its preoccupation with context deflects attention from the more demanding and more crucial work of giving an account of what each value entails. Second, although it cites characteristics most likely to be endorsed by a significant proportion of the population, the Report fails to justify its selection of the six proposed values over the eight mentioned in the introduction and subsequently lost from sight. Third, as we have shown, the category of honour clearly harbours some potential vices. Threading through the discussion of values in the Report is a rather arbitrary and incomplete set of strategies for how to get from where we are to where we might better be. It thus partly meets the final adequacy criterion on our list.

Whatever its flaws, the Report was a crucial part of the process of policy development. As a consequence of the extended public debate that followed its publication, many of Report's flaws were corrected in the later Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy, which is considerably more expansive in its conception of values and character education.

## *2.2 Looking for Values in the Constitution*

In his foreword to The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy, former Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, describes the Manifesto as an attempt to flesh out the idea of a democratic South Africa. While it retains some of the ideas from the earlier Report, the Manifesto is a completely new document, distinguished by repeated caveats against any imposition of values and against a doctrinaire acceptance of its views. The claimed intention of the Manifesto is "to generate discussion and debate, and to acknowledge that discussion and debate are values in themselves" (Department of Education 2001, Executive Summary, p. 1).

Whereas the earlier Report gestured towards the Constitution, the Manifesto works explicitly with values enshrined in the Constitution and sets out to suggest how "the Constitution can be taught, as part of the curriculum, and brought to life in the classroom, as well as applied practically in programmes and policymaking by educators, administrators, governing bodies and officials" (James, Executive Summary, p. 1). Compared with the six values proposed in the Working Group Report, the Manifesto identifies ten: democracy; social justice and equity; equality; non-racism and non-sexism; *ubuntu* (human dignity); sustaining an open society; accountability (responsibility); rule of law; respect; and reconciliation. The Manifesto discusses 16 strategies or approaches for fostering the constitutional values in the education system.

Democrats are likely to applaud much in this revised list of values. Though briefly articulated, their derivation from our Constitution, with its wide-ranging set of rights and goods, as well as its significance as an inspiring symbol of reconciliation, makes them highly relevant to their context. The Constitutional framework also helps towards a more coherent and expansive justification of the need for values education, and for its selection of values for development through education. With the Constitution and its Bill of Rights as its justificatory framework, the Manifesto need not carry the full burden of defining the values it proposes. But in meeting these criteria of adequacy so thoroughly, the Manifesto opens itself to problems in other respects. For by taking the Constitution as its foundation, the Manifesto's ten fundamental values favour the public, political sphere over the personal or the private.

At the heart of the Manifesto is a concern both about moral degeneration and about the loss of cohesion and unity of purpose since 1994. In casting its aims in terms of values, the Manifesto emphasises at the outset (Introduction, p. 1) the formative influence of "ways of doing things and the values on which they rest" in schools and other educational institutions. However, sometimes the Manifesto discusses "values" and sometimes "democratic values". A close reading reveals a preoccupation with the latter with special reference to the Constitution. Indeed, it is possible to read the Manifesto as implying that the Constitution is an epiphanous source for deriving all the important values to be taught in our schools. Even respect is cast as a constitutional value. Not only does this attribute axiomatic status to the Constitution; it also raises questions about whether and where other equally important personal values are to be addressed. Treating the Constitution as divine revelation would of course run counter to its spirit and the spirit of open critical debate in which former Minister Asmal presents the Manifesto. Still, where we are concerned with developing civic virtues in a culturally diverse democracy, perhaps it is entirely proper to treat the Constitution as the sole – although not sacrosanct – source of values to be developed through education in common schools. To stray from the public domain, some might argue, would be to risk inappropriate value imposition. In any event, treating respect as a constitutional value is surely in keeping with democratic theories that include mutual respect among the virtues of a democratic character (see, e.g., Gould 1984; Young 1990, 2000). Ring-fencing respect in the forum need not deny that it is equally desirable in bedrooms and

backyards. But that leaves open the educational question of how people come to learn respect. No doubt learning respectful treatment of friends and family, and everyday acquaintances – intimates as well as strangers – plays an important part in the development of civic respect.

The trouble is that the Manifesto, for all its apparent coherence, is not consistent in ring-fencing civic virtues for educational attention. Despite its emphasis on the Constitution as the source of democratic values, the Manifesto also gestures towards a link between morality and values, and indicates an interest in values that make relationships and life itself, meaningful:

> The one thing that transcends language, or the outward expressions of culture, our physical appearance, our age or sex or belief, is the values that we cherish and live by, values that give meaning to our individual and social relationships, even our solitary spiritual journeys and our intellectual and imaginative excursions. (Department of Education 2001, p. 9)

The Manifesto acknowledges (p. 11) that we do not give enough thought to education as the improvement of character and invokes the principle of a well-rounded education. Serious application of this injunction could have led to the Manifesto giving more than passing attention to the virtues of compassion, kindness, altruism, and respect, all mentioned as flowing out of *ubuntu*, and to self-discipline, dedication, tolerance, trust, and (again) respect, which are assumed to be achievable through the tutelage of sport. *Ubuntu*, which appears to have been given a special role among the more recognisable democratic values proposed in the Manifesto, is open to two rather different interpretations – a non-expansive interpretation that advances conservative communitarian interests to the detriment of the democratic project and a more expansive interpretation that advances an inclusive compassion as a condition for social justice. We take this up in the next section.

In discussing the strategy of nurturing a culture of sexual and social responsibility, responsibility and integrity are mentioned in passing. Passing glances in the direction of values so pivotal to personal integrity surely betrays the concern for a well-rounded education. Yet the Manifesto seems to assume a simplistic continuum: "Enriching the individual [by instilling a broad sense of values through a balanced exposure to the humanities as well as the sciences] is, by extension, enriching the society too" (p. 1). In a sense this is obviously true. But if it is read to imply that the same set of values is at stake on the continuum implied here, then it misleads. The Manifesto appears to suggest that if individuals adopt the values of the Constitution, the society will reflect the values of the Constitution throughout. A more refined way of relating individual to society is to see that there are also values beyond the constitutional that make individual lives meaningful.

Much of the earlier Report was preoccupied with institutional issues, for example, making access to education more equal and making teachers more accountable. No doubt values are more likely to be successfully taught in schools whose ethos reflects the right set of values. The Manifesto does at least succeed in distinguishing between articulating a set of values and proposing some strategies to foster them. But it is rather too preoccupied with institutional and systemic problems, devoting more than double the space to them, compared with the space and attention given to explaining what it means by the values it

defends. In this respect, the Manifesto is not as expansive as it might have been. Its preoccupation with strategy is probably why it tends to treat both the values and the means to their achievement in quite narrowly instrumental terms, as seen in its discussion of sport and of arts and culture. In the executive summary (p. 2) social justice is interpreted centrally as addressing poverty (as well as "rights to freedom of expression and choice"), with education marked as the most important resource in this cause.

In its treatment of moral judgement, the Manifesto also falls well short of an expansive conception of values education. While the executive summary declares that "[i]nculcating a sense of values at school is intended to help young people achieve higher levels of moral judgment" (p. 1), little attention is given to how such higher levels might be reached, apart from a brief reference to Kohlberg's now controversial stages of moral development. Not only are we given no strategies for developing higher levels of moral judgement, but the Manifesto says very little about the relationship between the knowledge, understanding and discernment required for moral judgement. But perhaps it is misguided to expect a *manifesto* to accomplish fine-grained conceptual work.

To its credit a number of the Manifesto's strategies address gender inequality, namely, those dealing with the rule of law, making schools safe, nurturing a culture of sexual and social responsibility, and freeing the potential of girls. And the Manifesto is commendably concerned to address the violence in our society and our schools. But non-sexism does not mean mere gender equality and, as we argue in the next section, one dominant interpretation of the value of *ubuntu* undermines the project of gender justice in education and in South African society at large (see also Gilligan 1982).

Of the 16 strategies recommended for nurturing the ten values perhaps the most commendable is "Putting History back into the curriculum". Developing the already detailed emphasis in the Report, this strategy shows the way to preventing amnesia and combating triumphalism, both of which can be considered vices in a South African context. The promise of several other strategies is betrayed in the detail. For example, there is much that is imaginative and desirable in the strategy of making arts and culture part of the curriculum. Imagination and the capacity for well-honed creative expression are constitutive of the discernment that is so crucial to sensitive moral judgement. The arts, properly taught, have an obvious role. However, the Manifesto while purporting to laud the liberated imagination is dull, predictable and yet again in thrall to the Constitution as an epiphanous source of all goods. A narrowly instrumental treatment of the arts in education forces a link between the arts and constitutional values:

> [A]rts and culture education … is a vital means through which the constitutional values of equality, non-racism, ubuntu, openness, reconciliation and respect can be instilled in young South Africans. (p. 16)

Notably absent from the Manifesto's account of the arts is any discussion of literature, which receives only a brief mention. Yet literature, of all the arts, has the richest possibilities for developing the moral imagination and a fine-tuned

understanding of the human condition and its many, often intractable, dilemmas. Novels and plays offer portrayals of virtues and vices in action, and of moral dilemmas and the difficulties of resolving them that seem too obvious to omit. Could it be that literature has been relegated to a back seat because it is seen to represent high culture? Unlike some of the strategies that feature prominently in both documents, literature illustrates how complex values are, how hard it is to be good and how intricate the relationships between values, virtues and vices. For novelist Ian McEwan, novels are not about "teaching people how to live but about showing people the possibility of what it is like to be someone else," which is "the basis of all sympathy, empathy and compassion. Other people are as alive as you are. Cruelty is a failure of imagination" (MacEwan & Ian 2001). History, too, can show the possibility of what it is like to be someone else, especially such moving oral histories as those of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Jeff Benzien's pride in his skills of torture was surely a failure of imagination. While the Manifesto pays lip service to imagination, many of its recommendations imply a narrowly instrumental approach to promoting values and their enabling virtues, e.g., arts for toleration, sport for patriotism and nation-building. Amelie Rorty (1999) is not so sanguine about the role of literature and the imagination in refining our moral sensibilities:

> [V]ividly imagining cruelty at work does not necessarily make us more alert to our own forms of cruelty; nor does it necessarily make us more inclined to combat it. There is after all, no guarantee that we will identify with victims rather than villains. (p. 20)

Even if we grant that literature and other sorts of stories may work against rather than for compassion, this is not a reason for abandoning them but rather a caution against assuming that imagination, left to its own devices, will always work for the good. Martha Nussbaum (2001), for example, offers a rich defence of the role of the imagination and reason in forging a reflective compassion, in full acknowledgement of the uneducated imagination's capacity for subverting rather than supporting the good.

"Nurturing the New Patriotism" is the most problematic of the strategies. Not only is this a category mistake (why is patriotism cast as a strategy and not a value?), but the account of the new patriotism is shot through with contradictions. Part of the account insists that what is called for is constitutional patriotism not jingoism, yet the proposed activities for promoting patriotism seem little different from the ritualistic and blind reverence for national symbols so despised under apartheid. Rallying around new symbols – a flag, an anthem, a coat of arms and some new sports insignia – is not an educative activity that teaches discernment, judgement and critical citizenship, the very qualities required for constitutional patriotism. In this strategy, the Manifesto reverts to a non-expansive approach.

The Manifesto's position on the continuum between expansive and non-expansive approaches depends critically, although not solely, on how the value of *ubuntu* is understood. As we have already mentioned, *ubuntu* has been given a special role among the more recognisable democratic values proposed in the Manifesto.

## 3 Ubuntu: Conservative Communalism or Reflective Compassion?

As described in the Manifesto, *ubuntu* embodies "the concept of mutual understanding and the active appreciation of the value of human difference" and is inseparable from respect for human dignity as the primary Constitutional foundation of the South African state (Department of Education 2001, p. 2). *Ubuntu* "goes beyond the requirements of equality, non-sexism and non-racism"; it "requires you to know others if you are to know yourself, and if you are to understand your place – and others' – within a multicultural environment. Ultimately, ubuntu requires you to respect others if you are to respect yourself" (p. 14).

On the face of it, this is an expansive conception of *ubuntu*, closely linked to other civic virtues in a diverse democracy. But there is a non-expansive traditional interpretation which enjoys pride of place in the recent upsurge of writing in southern Africa in defence of African philosophy of education and is "a key concept in an African notion of transformation" (Van Wyk 2005, p. 106). Here the idea of *ubuntu* is closely associated with an emphasis on humaneness, harmony with all creation, communalism and a return to traditional values and forms of knowledge. For example, in their proposal for a return to a form of indigenous African education, Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2003) propose that the principles that informed customary African education be reclaimed. Hence pupils should be equipped with the skills that would enable them to play their distinctive roles in society, including their designated gender roles; education is seen as a means of preserving and maintaining the status quo, especially the community's cultural heritage. Communalism implies both common ownership of goods and that members of the community apply a communal spirit to work and to life in general. Understood in the context of communalism, *ubuntu* rejects individualism on both ontological and ethical grounds (see Le Grange 2005; Van Wyk 2005).

In its least expansive expression, the defence of *ubuntu* has been prominent in the Moral Regeneration Campaign led by Jacob Zuma, Deputy President of South Africa until mid-2005 when he was dismissed from this position because of charges of corruption. The Campaign was launched in response to a widely held concern that South African society faced a moral crisis (2004), fuelled by media reports on social vices like rape, political corruption, and high crime rates. Zuma conceived of a series of colloquia on the challenge of moral regeneration as a way of "renewing our value systems against an onslaught of social, moral and political decadence, which masquerades as modernity" (Department of Education & SABC 2000, p. 3; quoted in Dieltiens 2004). At the second workshop on Moral Regeneration, participants discussed the need to revive the values of *ubuntu*, by which they meant that Africans "should recover the long lost religio-socio-economic values by which pre-colonial communities of this continent lived and which impacted on every sphere of their lives, including the political systems" (Department of Education & SABC 2000, p. 3). As Dieltiens argues, this suggests "an easy transference of pre-colonial values into modern-day South Africa without taking into account the complex

realities that make its rural communitarianism appear simplistic". What is more, *ubuntu*, "as the Campaign describes it, is insular and exclusionary" and "appears to blame excessive individualism for the apparent moral collapse of South Africa today" (2004, p. 21). If Dieltiens is right in her analysis, and we believe she is, the Moral Regeneration Campaign exemplifies a non-expansive approach not only in its interpretation of *ubuntu* but in its motivation for values education:

> For the Moral Regeneration Campaign, values are essential in addressing the perceived moral decay of society, particularly noticeable in the growing criminality and violence among youth. . . .The Campaign blames criminality on lack of morality, without taking into account socio-economic conditions or even the failure of the education system to provide young disadvantaged learners with the skills or knowledge to be productive individuals. The Campaign, therefore, is not helpful to educators. The values it offers are too prescriptive and they fail the test of being democratically reflective. (Dieltiens 2004, p. 21)

So non-expansive a conception of *ubuntu* undermines rather than complements the democratic virtues that the Manifesto puts at the heart of values education for South African citizens. South Africa's Constitution, the Manifesto and several recent curriculum documents (Department of Education 2003, 2004, 2005) all provide, on the basis of a commitment to human rights, the warrant for a more commodious and democratically defensible conception of *ubuntu* as a close relative of compassion. For example, the guide to *Values and Human Rights in the Curriculum* (Department of Education 2005) locates values education within a human rights framework, in an effort to avoid the inappropriate imposition of culturally specific values:

> Human rights claim their roots simply in the humaneness people "contain" which cannot be separated from their being. Whilst some values may be specific to a culture or a religion, there are those which many would consider "universal". Amongst these are the values which form cornerstone of our own democracy: dignity, equality, justice and freedom. In our own context, our Constitution and Bill of Rights clarify how South Africans are to live within the parameters of these values. (p.7)

The statement that human rights "claim their roots simply in the humaneness people 'contain' which cannot be separated from their being" resonates with one of the Manifesto's claims about *ubuntu*: "Ubuntu has a particularly important place in our value system for it derives specifically from African mores: '*I am human because you are human*'" (our emphasis) (Department of Education 2001, p. 14).

Martha Nussbaum's (2001) account of reflective compassion as a basis for social justice suggests to us a way of interpreting *ubuntu*. She identifies three cognitive requirements for compassion: (i) the judgement of *size* (the suffering is serious and not trivial); (ii) the judgement of non-desert (the person did not bring the suffering on him or herself); (iii) the *eudaimonistic judgment (*this person is a significant element in my scheme of goals and projects, whose end is to be promoted). If any of the judgements that constitute compassion go awry, putative compassion becomes a dangerous guide for ethical action. For example, if *eudaimonistic* judgement is too narrow, people who fall outside of our circles of concern also fall beyond the scope of "compassion"; and our "compassion" for those within our circle may be unduly biased. If the judgement of non-desert takes no account, or insufficient account, of a person's capacity for responsible action and choice, then we may cast

that person or group of people as *mere* victims and so undermine or belittle their agency. A compassionate society is "one that takes full measure of the harms that befall citizens beyond their own doing; compassion thus provides a motive to secure for all the basic support that will undergird and protect human dignity" (p. 414). A conception of human flourishing and the major predicaments in human lives are thus implicit in the cognitive structure of compassion, where the *eudoministic* judgement rests on concerns very similar to those embedded in the mores "I am human because you are human".

Nussbaum proposes ways in which a society pursuing social justice might legitimately rely on and cultivate compassion and, at the same time, respond to both internal and external impediments to its benign operation. Her argument rests on a picture of the self as partly constituted by an evaluative engagement with the world outside itself. In this evaluative engagement, some emotions extend and open the boundaries of the self and others insulate the self from external contamination. A central task in educating compassion is to reduce the primal force of the insulating emotions that impede the development of compassion.

## 4 Concluding Remarks

Despite some inconsistencies and other flaws, South Africa's Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (Department of Education 2001) and supporting curriculum documents present an expansive approach to values education, with particular attention to democratic civic virtues. Earlier in the paper we listed seven loose overlapping criteria for evaluating values education policy. In most respects, the Manifesto and related curriculum documents satisfy these criteria. By taking the Constitution as its main conceptual frame, the Manifesto is not only conceptually coherent but also offers a fairly expansive justification both of the need for values education and for its selection of values. The Manifesto responds explicitly to the context of a society morally damaged by apartheid. The kinds of people it aims to develop are those who live by the values enshrined in the Constitution. In this, its conception of character education has much in common with the civic virtues approach of writers like Gutmann (1987) and Callan (1997) and focuses on values likely to be shared by a significant proportion of the population. The difficulty is that it accomplishes this by marginalising the personal. This is perhaps understandable in a context as culturally diverse as ours, but it is precisely on matters of the personal that the traditionalist interpretation of *ubuntu* is so dangerous.

How far the Manifesto meets the remaining criteria is an open question whose answer will depend on the extent and critical depth of uptake in practice. While to a reader versed in democratic theory the Manifesto's expression of theoretical assumptions as practical principles is clear, this may not be the case for all members of its intended audience. The practical principles of the Manifesto may be elusive for the many teachers trained in an authoritarian and non-expansive tradition, and under severe pressure from constant demands of ever-changing policy.

The recently published guide on *Values and Human Rights in the Curriculum* (Department of Education 2005) recognises this difficulty and provides a detailed interpretation and useful examples of how to use the principles to guide practice, but also adds to the intensification of teachers' work. Where policy demands have effectively reduced teachers' instructional time to only 41% of their total workload (Chisholm et al. 2005), it is simply not reasonable to expect the reflective engagement that the Manifesto and its strategies require.

This is one of several severe impediments to an expansive uptake in schools and even in the broader public arenas of lifelong learning. Another impediment, as we have shown, is the threat of a narrow, authoritarian and traditionalist understanding of *ubuntu* which corrals fellow-feeling within particular communities and so prevents the imaginative achievement of understanding what it would be like to be someone else.

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